

REMARKS

Upon entry of the present amendment, Applicants will have amended claims 7, 11, 14, 15, 18, 19 and 23. Additionally, claims 8 and 13 have been cancelled and claims 28 and 29 are being submitted for consideration by the Examiner. In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks taken together with the amendments and remarks filed in the above-noted Response of February 21, 2006, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of the outstanding rejections together with an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending in the present application, in due course. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believed to be appropriate and proper.

An Official Action was issued in the present application on September 27, 2005, in which all of then pending claims 1-6 were rejected. In response, Applicants filed a response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 on February 21, 2006, in which, *inter alia*, claims 1-6 were cancelled and new claims 7-27 were submitted for consideration by the Examiner. Additionally, remarks were submitted distinguishing the recitations of the newly submitted claims from the references of record in the present application and providing a clear evidentiary basis supporting the patentability of all the claims in the present application.

On May 23, 2006, the Examiner in charge of the present application contacted Applicants' representative and suggested several changes to the language of claim 7 so as to place the same in condition for allowance. While Applicants do not agree that these changes are necessary, but submit that all the claims in the present application are in condition for allowance, Applicants are making the requested changes to

accommodate the Examiner's concerns and to expedite the allowance of all the claims in the present application.

In addition, Applicants have made several additional language clarifying changes to the pending claims so as to enable the claims to more clearly and distinctly define the features of Applicants' invention. These amendments do not narrow the scope of the claims and thus do not give rise to any prosecution history estoppel. Additionally, Applicants have cancelled claims 8 and 13 and have submitted claims 28 and 29 in order to afford Applicants a scope of protection to which they are entitled.

During the above-noted telephone interview, the Examiner directed Applicants' attention to U.S. Patent No. 5,419,148 (KUEHL et al.). The Examiner is respectfully thanked for his diligence in examining the newly submitted claims as well for conducting an update search. Applicants respectfully submit that all the claims in the present application are clearly patentable over the newly cited patent to KUEHL et al. as well as the other references of record in the present application. In this regard, the Examiner is respectfully requested to complete the record in the present application by appropriately citing the above-noted KUEHL et al. reference on an 892 Form to confirm its consideration and to complete the record in the present application.

The Examiner is additionally thanked for his courtesy and cooperation during the above-noted interview as well as for his proactive approach towards the prosecution and examination of the present application. Additionally, Applicants respectfully thank the Examiner for his cooperation in clarifying the claim language and suggesting language that will even more clearly define the features of the claims in the present application.

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In view of the herein contained amendments and remarks, taken together with the amendments and remarks contained in the Response under 37 C.F.R. § 1.111 filed on February 21, 2006, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and withdrawal of each of the outstanding rejections of record in the present application together with an indication of the allowability of all the claims pending herein, in due course. Such action is respectfully requested and is now believe to be appropriate and proper.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Applicants have made a sincere effort to place the present application in condition for allowance and believe that they have now done so. Applicants have amended the claims in accordance with the Examiner's suggestion and have submitted two additional claims for consideration. Two claims have been cancelled. Applicants have thus set forth a clear evidentiary basis for the patentability of all the claims in the present application. An action to such effect is respectfully requested in due course.

Any amendments to the claims which have been made in this amendment, and which have not been specifically noted to overcome a rejection based upon the prior art, should be considered to have been made for a purpose unrelated to patentability, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto.

Should the Examiner have any questions or comments regarding this Response, or the present application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the below-listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,  
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